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University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Build paradise, tear down hell

The image of totalitarianism in science fiction literature (utopia, dystopia, dieselpunk) in Eastern Bloc countries

Theses of the Doctoral Dissertation

Mgr. Přemysl Krejčík

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Author: Mgr. Přemysl Krejčík
Supervisor: doc. Mgr. Pavel Panoch, Ph.D.

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Annotation

The present thesis reflects on the images of totalitarianism and dictatorships of the twentieth century manifested in works of science fiction literature, which usually stands at the margins of scholarly research. It focuses primarily on the reflections of communist ideology in dystopian and utopian literature, while also looking at the prefiguring of communist ideology in earlier utopian literature, and the reflection of Nazi ideology in dieselpunk literature. The aim of the thesis is to find the continuity of the development of this motif in literary fiction and to reflect on its development during the twentieth century with overlaps to Baroque literature and, on the other hand, in overlaps to the present. The thesis is divided into four parts, the first of which lays the theoretical and historical groundwork, while the following part reflects on the rich tradition of utopian writing and, in particular, its transformation in the twentieth century. The next part of the thesis is devoted to questions of individual identity in the dystopias of the second half of the twentieth century, taking into account the turn in dystopian writing in the 1980s, where we find a link to communist space utopias. The final section reflects on the prefigurations of the dieselpunk genre, focusing on fascist, Nazi (and marginally also communist) totalitarianism, and also presents the contemporary form of Anglo-American, Czech, Russian and Polish dieselpunk, taking into account the genre's manifestations in other literatures, and possibly in the visual arts.

Keywords

totality, totalitarianism, science fiction, communism, fascism, nazism, utopia, space utopia, dystopia, dieselpunk

The point from which we proceed in the processing of this topic has been the assumption from the beginning that totalitarian practices, as they have been imprinted and manifested in the fantastic in Czech, Polish and Russian literature,¹ also due to their influence on world fantasy, sufficiently represent this topic for the whole of Eastern European science fiction. The latter in itself further adds to the not well-mapped historical and cultural reflection of the second half of the twentieth century in art.

The aim of our research is thus to map the most important motifs of contemporary thought and their manifestations in three genre variants of fantastic literature: Utopia, which has its roots in antiquity; dystopia,² which

¹ We have chosen these three literatures for the following reasons: the Czech fiction is not sufficiently researched, therefore we pay the most attention to it. Although Russian and Polish fantasy, utopias and dystopias have received much reflection (including in the English-speaking world), we approach them here in contrast to Czech literature. We have chosen Russian and Polish literature because of their considerable influence, mostly in utopian writing and, in the case of Russian literature, in dystopian writing as well. Russian fantasy literature has to some extent determined the direction of the whole Eastern European fantasy literature, while Polish literature has been included mainly because of its cultural and geographical proximity to the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia, and the breadth of cultural transfer between the two countries. Thus, Polish and Russian literature complement the reflection of Czech contemporary fantasy, mainly because of their cultural and literary proximity, although (and probably because of this) the resulting conception of certain motifs and themes is quite different in Czech, Polish and Russian fantasy, although the thematic backgrounds of the writers in the different genres of fantasy were similar.

² According to some scholars, it is necessary to distinguish dystopia, anti-utopia, or negative utopia, counter-utopia, etc. as different genres. However, we have already established in previous research that the attempt to distinguish between anti-utopia and dystopia as two different genres is artificial, and despite the fact that it is sometimes claimed that there is a difference between the two genres (the nature of these differences, however, varies in different

emerged in the twentieth century as a direct negation of utopian thought; and, most recently, dieselpunk, one of the youngest genres of literary fiction, which, however, primarily treats and thematizes historical material, and despite the fact that the earliest works of this genre are generally considered to be prose works from the 1960s at the latest, the genre took root in the Czech environment in the 1940s.

definitions), we consider them to be synonymous. For the purposes of our work, we will stick to the term dystopia, which is more common in the English-language literature, although the term anti-utopia, or some other term that is also synonymous, is occasionally found there as well. The difference between antiutopia, dystopia or negative utopia is essentially terminological. On the hypothetical differences and synonymy of the terms antiutopia, dystopia, counterutopia and others, see. KREJČÍK, Přemysl. *Zatmění po utopickém večírku: Sonda do české dystopické prózy 80. let 20. století*, Universita Pardubice: Pardubice 2019, pp. 39-40. ISBN 978-80-7560-237-4; HRTÁNEK, Petr. *Negativní utopie v české próze druhé poloviny 20. století: pokus o znakovou identifikaci žánru*. Ostrava: Ostravská Univerzita, Faculty of Arts 2004, p. 7. ISBN 80-7042-645-4.

Basic thesis and genre structure of the thesis

The initial thesis we argue in this thesis is that science fiction (especially utopia and dystopia) can be seen as part of historical and collective memory. The works of these genres captured not only the thinking of the time, but also the fears of the time and also the ideas of the future, influenced, of course, by communist doctrine, especially the idea that a communist society was the culmination of human social development. In our opinion, the literary visions that support or, on the contrary, negate the discourse of the time are a valuable historical source, although they must be treated with some caution, since they were created primarily as fiction. However, fiction influenced by the time of its creation to such an extent that its association with communist totalitarianism is quite inseparable: Whether they are texts that support communist doctrines and the discourse of communist thought, or, on the contrary, texts that oppose it, these prose works were always produced in direct relation to the political and social climate.

In the case of the utopias produced primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, these were visions of the future defeat of capitalism and the establishment of a common communist future for the entire planet Earth (in some cases, the entire universe), These visions of the future were based on communist doctrine and their authors were already building on the baroque utopias of More and Campanella, as well as on the works of utopian socialism of the early twentieth century (and we pay attention to both baroque and utopian socialist works in our text).

Compares to that, dystopian texts were no longer based on ideas of a bright future, on utopian optimism about the completion of the communist paradise on Earth (and in the universe). The authors of dystopias revealed the

disillusionment of contemporary totalitarianism. They were reacting to the collapse of the utopian idea and to the totalitarian reality that was created precisely by the pursuit of a utopian paradise. In their work, we will focus primarily on the question of the identity of the individual, lost in a totalitarian establishment, and on the possible ways out offered by prose writers to cope with their own existence in a totalitarian environment. Somewhat paradoxically, the crisis of the individual's identity culminates with the advent of cyberpunk, where the dystopian environment is represented by capitalist corporations and the role of the "enemy" returns to capitalism, the latter having been the target of communist utopias in the twentieth century.

The thesis will conclude with a chapter focusing on the genre variant of science fiction referred to as dieselpunk. The latter turns its attention, with a large temporal distance, to fascist and Nazi totalitarianism, or to the Second World War. There are several reasons for the inclusion of this chapter: The first is that the theme of totalitarianism in science fiction has undergone a certain continuous development - from utopian texts, which considered totalitarianism as a positive trend, to dystopias, to dieselpunk in particular, which rejects the overly serious tone of thematising totalitarianism and, by de facto deconstructing the seriousness of writing about totalitarianism, concludes the development of this theme in literary fiction (although continuous with dieselpunk there are still dystopias, undergoing a rather radical development even today). The second fundamental reason why we include dieselpunk in our work is that in Czechoslovakia, as early as the 1940s, a work was created that completely fulfils the ideas of the genre's predecessors, yet it has not been reflected upon from this point of view. At the same time, it is a work that stands on the borderline between the two totalities, as it reacts to Nazi totalitarianism, while approaching the idea of

communism with a naivety that is characteristic of, among other things, the genre of utopia.

The theoretical background, the philosophical concept of totality and the translation of this concept into political practice, is the subject of a separate chapter, preceding the section on utopias. The question of utopian socialism in its historical context, on which the selected utopias build, is then addressed in the introduction to the chapter on utopias, this introduction building smoothly on the previous theoretical-historical framework. However, we have chosen to attach the Marxist and utopian-socialist foundations to the chapter dealing with the specific literary genre (and the thought-construct associated with it) on the grounds that this thought-construct (and the attempts to put it into practice) are much more intrinsically linked to literary utopias than to the following dystopia, i.e. the negation of utopia.

Research objectives

The main result of the work is a reflection on the different conceptions of totalitarianism in the genres of literary fiction with regard to the doctrine of the time.

In the case of utopias, this is a summary of the most common motifs (present since the first dystopias and also present in the theory of utopian socialism and in the practices of communist totalitarianism), based on detailed analyses of selected literary works with regard to contemporary reality and communist ideology.

The result of the chapter dealing with dieselpunk completes the overall picture of the reflection of totalitarianism in science fiction literature of the former Eastern Bloc countries, while dieselpunk does not refer exclusively to fascist and Nazi totalitarianism, but in some cases also reflects the communist dictatorship. This chapter also provides the first ever in-depth scholarly reflection on dieselpunk, as such is not present even in foreign literature.

Taken together, these sub-results represent science fiction in comparison with contemporary discourse, especially in terms of the political regime, its criticism or sympathy with its ideas.

The intention was also to find specific images of the time, projected in science fiction (for example, the space race and its development reflected in utopian texts, including optimistic perspectives on the future), in relation to changes in the socio-political climate.

The resulting work presents the evolution of the perception of totalitarianism in (mainly Eastern European) science fiction writers from the origins of the genre to the present, in particular from the earliest conceptions of utopias, through the enthusiastic utopian celebrations of the communist regime and

the dystopian "sobering up" of illusions of a communist utopian future, to the distanced and modern (but often – but not usually – less serious) conception of totalitarianism in dieselpunk.

Utopia

Utopia is clearly the oldest of the chosen genres, its roots going back at least to the Baroque literature.³ In its beginnings, utopia dealt with an alternative state apparatus, an unrealistic version of an ideal world and the functioning of laws and society. But in the period that becomes the focus of our research, utopias written in countries ruled by communist regimes turn to the future: to an idealised vision of a time when the conquest of space is the order of the day and the problems of planet Earth are a thing of the past. Despite the fact that utopian literature itself has been reflected on many times (especially the baroque utopias in relation to communist doctrine), what is lacking so far is a reflection on these "space utopias" that seeks in a unified form the common features of this genre variant and finds reflections of communist idealism and contemporary communist optimism precisely in science fiction. It is also for this reason that the chapter dealing with utopias is the most extensive in our work: In order to understand the utopias written in the twentieth century in the Eastern Bloc countries, it is first necessary to meaningfully reflect on earlier utopian texts (i.e., the baroque utopias of Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella) in relation to utopian socialism and communist doctrine. Next, we consider it necessary to analyze the – now almost forgotten – utopian text of Alexander Bogdanov from the early twentieth century, as these older texts will provide us with the necessary insight into the continuous development of the genre up to the space utopias. The selected space utopias will then be thoroughly analysed in terms of their motives and searched for common

³ JAMES, Edward – MENDLESOHN, Farah (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2003, s. XX. ISBN 978-0-521-01657-5.

features, in addition to being underpinned by contemporary communist doctrine. At the same time, we compare their presence with earlier utopian texts (i.e. texts written before the formation of communist ideas and attempts to put them into practice).

We selected utopian texts from the second half of the twentieth century with a view to ensuring that the texts analysed came from different decades, from different countries, and were intended for different audiences, since utopias were written not only as texts aimed at adult readers but also at adolescent readers, and their agitation for a projected communist future had a propagandist educational character.

Dystopia

The genre of dystopias has already been thoroughly addressed in our previous research, which has yielded the following results: the most frequent motif of dystopian texts is criticism of (or warning against) politically motivated totalitarianism, usually alluding to the totalitarian communist regime.⁴ In addition to this theme, however, dystopias often reflect social decay, ecological threats, or feminist themes (while we also looked at the stereotyping of gender roles in dystopias⁵). However, these, and many other, motifs were usually present alongside the (not infrequently prevalent) allegory of totalitarianism and possibly other political topics.⁶

So far, however, we have not paid attention to another crucial motif arising from the most frequently reflected theme: that of the individual's place in a totalitarian world and his/her identity in relation to the world/state. This theme is (unlike in the case of utopias, whose authors found in the communist world not a totalitarian but a completely positive future) present in some way in virtually every dystopian text. This time, we approach the analysis of the aforementioned not by means of detailed motivic analyses of individual texts, but by means of a probe method, looking for a specific motif in a large number

⁴ KREJČÍK, Přemysl. *Zatmění po utopickém večírku: Sonda do české dystopické prózy 80. let 20. století*, Univerzita Pardubice: Pardubice 2019, p. 213. ISBN 978-80-7560-237-4.

⁵ KREJČÍK, Přemysl. Genderové stereotypy v české dystopické próze druhé poloviny 20. století, in: RÁGYANSZKI, György (ed.). *Fiatal Szlavisták Budapesti Nemzetközi Konferenciája VIII. ELTE BTK Szláv és Balti Filológiai Intézet*, Dr. Kiss Szemán Róbert: Budapest 2020, pp. 51-54. ISBN 978-963-489-193-2.

⁶ KREJČÍK, Přemysl. *Zatmění po utopickém večírku: Sonda do české dystopické prózy 80. let 20. století*, Univerzita Pardubice: Pardubice 2019, pp. 218.-230 ISBN 978-80-7560-237-4.

of prose works. Especially in Czech ones, but also taking into account Western dystopias and dystopias written in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc, especially Russian ones. We conclude the chapter by suggesting a turn in dystopian thinking, whereby Western literature (through a genre variant of literary fiction called cyberpunk) is in a way returning to a critique of the system already criticized by the authors of utopias: cyberpunk authors (unlike other dystopian authors) do not reflect in a critical way on the communist dictatorship, but on the world of capitalism and its extreme hypothetical forms, which they find dystopian in their own way.

Dieselpunk

If the authors of alien utopias look to the future, and the authors of the younger dystopian genre reflect on the contemporary present, it is not surprising that the youngest genre, with which we will conclude our exploration, reflects on the past. Dieselpunk is a genre that only emerged at the beginning of this millennium, but the attention of dieselpunk authors is primarily focused on the First World War, the interwar era, and the Second World War. Dieselpunk can be considered, for the time being, the last evolutionary stage of literary fiction genres that somehow deal with the reflection of totalitarian regimes, although the authors of dieselpunk works do so in a very specific way and, compared to utopias and dystopias, the texts highlight the entertainment component of the literary work. The space for criticism of totalitarianism or utopian futures is very limited here.

Since the genre has not received a deeper reflection in foreign literature, we find it necessary to devote a rather extensive part of the chapter to the history and definition of the genre, because even in the very attempt to define dieselpunk we encounter a number of problems related to the multiplicity and diversity of definitions, mostly created by (usually English-writing) authors and fans of dieselpunk. In this section we work primarily with literary sources written in English, as these have the most significant influence on the form of dieselpunk.

After a section on the definition of dieselpunk, its variants and forms, we reflect on what is probably the oldest dieselpunk work, which surprisingly originated in Czechoslovakia and was published in 1946⁷, almost twenty years

⁷ DOBROVOLNÝ, B. V. *Ďasíci – Tajné zbraně*, Nakladatelské družstvo Máje (Máj): Prague 1946. Without ISBN.

before the first English-language works generally considered to be the forefathers of dieselpunk. In the rest of the chapter, we discuss contemporary forms of dieselpunk and their reflection of the past (and possibly totalitarian regimes) in Czech, Russian and Polish literature.

Working with a genre for which there is a relatively weak base of secondary literature and other secondary sources, we again base this chapter on our own analyses of literary works, but supplement it with reflections of dieselpunk authors (authors from the USA, Ireland, Poland and the Czech Republic), whom we have asked several questions for this purpose, as we consider their personal insights into the genre – usually unrecorded so far - to be a very valuable addition to a better understanding of the nature of dieselpunk.

Results

In mapping out the most significant and prominent motifs of totalitarianism as they manifested themselves in the literary genre of science fiction during the twentieth century (or rather in three genre variants that are inherently linked to the reflection of totalitarian regimes in different ways), we have relied primarily on three genre variants: utopia, dystopia and dieselpunk. We approached each of the genres in a different, specific way that was directly related to the current state of knowledge and research on the topic:

We devote most space in this work to utopias, or rather to the variant of utopian science fiction that emerged in the twentieth century and is inextricably linked to the communist doctrine of the time, to the building of socialism, and to the prospect of a happy communist future: For our purposes, we call this kind of literature "space utopia" because it is a utopian text that is united by the theme of space conquest after comprehensive communism (and the planet-wide peace that goes with it) has reigned on planet Earth, allowing humanity to further its technological development. This type of utopia was particularly popular in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc (using Czech, Polish and Russian prose as a probing sample) from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, although the first prose texts of this kind were written in the post-World War I period.

The utopian tradition was followed chronologically by the genre of dystopia, which, although it emerged in the first quarter of the twentieth century, most dystopian texts were not written until the second half of the twentieth century. In the chapter focusing on dystopias, we have built on our previous research, which has shown that dystopian texts were mainly produced as a reaction to the communist regime and its totalitarian practices. We then

addressed a topic that has been neglected in our research on dystopias, namely the theme of the identity of the individual reflected in dystopian prose in relation to the relationship with the ruling regime. As a prose sample we have used mainly texts written in Czechoslovakia, but also with regard to dystopias from other countries.

The last science fiction genre variant we deal with in our work is dieselpunk. This is a type of literature that has emerged in recent decades and thematically refers to the period from the 1920s to the 1950s. Since Czech and foreign scholarship has so far lacked any comprehensive reflection on this genre, we have devoted a substantial part of the chapter to defining dieselpunk and identifying its various types. In the next part of the chapter we found elements of dieselpunk in contemporary Czech, Polish and Russian literature, and we also looked for the origins of the genre in Czech literature, which is older than American literature, which is commonly cited as the beginning of dieselpunk.

The result of these analyses of the three literary genres is a confirmation of our initial thesis that science fiction dealing with totalitarian regimes is a carrier of contemporary collective memory and reflects the evolution of the view of totalitarian regimes.

While space utopias reflect official contemporary optimism and belief in a communist future, authors thematize Marxist and communist doctrines (such as the desire to suppress religion or hostility to capitalism), the next generation of writers - dystopian writers - unmask the totalitarian practices of the communist system put into practice, the genre reveals utopian disillusionment, and writers focus on the theme of the individual in totalitarianism, since totalitarianism (already in the philosophical conception of the term) aims above all at the suppression of everything else, everything individual. The writers of dystopias – in contrast to the writers of space

utopias – do not see in the communist and Marxist suppression of individuality the path to a better future, but the path to totalitarianism and the liquidation of individualism. The view of totalitarianism is to some extent inverted by the dystopian literary genre that emerged in American literature in the 1980s – cyberpunk – whose authors find totalitarian threats in the near future, in conjunction with capitalism, thus partly in line with the space utopians.

The final stage in the development of the view of totalitarian regimes is the distance view, that is, the view of contemporary writers. For writers in the science fiction genre, communist totalitarianism is not such a crucial theme nowadays, but more often they turn to Nazi totalitarianism, through (of course not only) dieselpunk. In this latter phase, these are no longer either adulatory utopian texts imagining a happy future or dystopian visions warning against the development of totalitarianism in its extreme form, but the texts return to their entertainment function, with dieselpunk authors bending and varying historical facts and period aesthetics, often primarily for the purposes of the story or in the name of the aesthetics of the literary genre. In addition to historiographical and historical premises, we have also relied on theoretical philosophical premises. In addition to the philosophy of Marxism, of which we find reflections primarily in utopian writing (and which, in turn, itself derives from earlier, especially Baroque, utopias), we also draw on the philosophical concept of totalitarianism as set forth by the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, whose conception can be summarized as follows: Totality is the destruction of everything that is different (i.e., individualism) and the transformation of the same into the same as everything else.⁸

⁸ LÉVINAS, Emmanuel. *Totalita a nekonečno: (esej o exterioritě)*, OIKOYMENH: Praha 1997. ISBN 80-86005-20-8.

This is a principle inherent in totalitarian regimes and a principle that we find on two levels in science fiction. While the authors of space utopias adore for sameness, for the unity of humanity, the authors of dystopias see in it a threat and the destruction of all personal freedoms.

In the following subsection, we will discuss the aforementioned philosophical concept in confrontation with state totalitarianism, political totalitarianism. On the basis of expert reflections on political totalitarianism, we show that the philosophical concept translated into practice turned out to be just as Lévinas described it. In doing so, we also take into account the current historiographical discussions on the topic of totalitarianism, the various efforts to revise and recapture this concept, or to exclude from totalitarianism the period of communist domination.⁹ However, with regard to foreign scholars and a substantial part of the domestic scientific community and their arguments, we are inclined to the view that the societies and states built by fascists, Nazis and communists can be considered totalitarian, as well as the doctrines of these ideologies put into practice.

We also devote a short chapter to the question of propaganda in science fiction, which is evident in utopias, but also in works that predate the emergence of dieselpunk: While the space utopias can be seen as supporting (or resulting from) communist propaganda, the works establishing the aesthetics of later dieselpunk, since the latter was heavily influenced by US war propaganda and was also a tool of it.

⁹ More on this topic: ŠTEFEK, Martin – BUBEN, Radek. *Konceptuální labyrinty. Kolik pojetí totalitarismu znáš, tolikrát jsi revizionistou?* [online]. Soudobé dějiny / Czech Journal of Contemporary History XXVIII / 2, 11. 6. 2021, [cited 2021-8-16]. Available from: <https://sd.usd.cas.cz/getrevsrc.php?identification=public&mag=sod&raid=19&type=fin&ver=1>

In the thematic unit dealing with utopianism, we first recall the utopian tradition, the beginning of which is also often considered to be the beginning of the genre of science fiction as such,¹⁰ after which we discuss the development of utopian literature, or rather, the reflection of utopian thought in literature, and the evolution of the original utopian idealism (the utopian dream of an ideal and egalitarian state) to the constructionist ideal, with utopian socialism drawing on, among other things, the ideas expressed in Thomas More's *Utopia*¹¹ in the sixteenth century and in Thomas Campanella's *La città del sole*¹² in the seventeenth century. We are concerned with the transformation of utopian ideas into totalitarian practices, through the transformation of original egalitarian Marxist ideas into repressive, i.e. totalitarian, ideas. In this section, we also recall the influence on the formation of later communist doctrine, and also utopian socialism, of the works of the philosophers Charles Fourier, Friedrich Engels and, of course, Karl Marx. Indeed, these authors also drew on Moore and Campanella, whose key texts we analyse in the next section of the thesis, and find motifs later prominent in twentieth-century space utopias.

¹⁰ More on this topic: BRAND, Carina. 'Feeding Like a Parasite': Extraction and Science Fiction in Capitalist Dystopia, p. 95, in: DAVIES, William (ed.), *Economic Science Fictions*, Goldsmiths Press, London 2018, pp. 95-123. ISBN 1-906897-68-0; JAMES, Edward – MENDLESOHN, Farah (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2003, p. XX. ISBN 978-0-521-01657-5; FERNS, Chris. Utopia, Anti-Utopia and Science Fiction, p. 55, in: SAWYER, Andy – WRIGHT, Peter (edd.). *Teaching Science Fiction*. Palgrave Macmillan: Hampshire 2011, pp. 55-71. ISBN 978-0-230-22851-1.

¹¹ MORE, Thomas. *Utopie*, Městská knihovna v Praze: Prague 2019, e-book (epub). ISBN 978-80-7602-722-0.

¹² CAMPANELLA, Tommaso. *Sluneční stát*, Mladá fronta: Prague 1979. Without ISBN.

We find two reasons why twentieth-century utopias focus specifically on the conquest of space: The first reason is the vision of an all-planet communist future in which humanity would defeat capitalism and live in unity in peace, according to communist ideas, and could concentrate on further scientific development and the discovery of alien planets, or of life on these planets, where communism and its message could also be further spread.

The second reason for the popularity of space themes in utopias was the ongoing space race between East and West, in which the Soviet Union had led easily until the late 1960s (i.e., the first successful flight and entry of an American space crew on the Moon), and there was considerable reason for optimism in the communist world's conquest of space. This is also, of course, reflected in specific works of science fiction, which usually present a hypothetical future in which communism not only reigned supreme on Earth, but also made peace and the development of spaceflight possible, in which it was always ahead of the curve, as in science in general.

In addition to the optimism stemming from communist propaganda, and the undeniable success of space flight, twentieth-century utopians drew on ideas shaped by utopian socialism, and in this way we find continuity between the space utopias of the twentieth century and the utopias of the humanist authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Both types of utopias share the idea of a cohesive society in which personal property has lost its importance and the welfare of the collective is superior to that of the individual.¹³

Similar ideas, and an emphasis on the importance of labour and the working class, can be found in what is arguably the first space utopia, the novel *Red*

¹³ These ideas not only correspond to Lévinas' description of totality, but also (to varying degrees) to the ideas of the philosophers Fourier, Engels and Marx.

Star, first published in 1908 and a response to the recent Russian Revolution. In a similar vein to this novel by Lenin's one-time friend and later political opponent, Alexander Bogdanov, are the utopias of the third quarter of the twentieth century, to which we devote detailed thematic analyses in the remaining sections of the chapter. Specifically, these are Vladimir Babula's novel *Signály z vesmíru* (1955),¹⁴ Stanislaw Lem's *Obtlok Magellana* (1955),¹⁵ Ivo Štuka and Teodor Rotrekel's *Šest dnů na Luně 1* (1963),¹⁶ and Arkady and Boris Strugatzky's *Трудно быть богом* (1964).¹⁷ After thorough analyses we came to several conclusions. The first, quite important, but at first sight marginal, is the fact that these texts cannot be collectively considered as primarily propaganda texts. Given the historical context of the authors' lives, and their literary production itself, their prose can be understood more as a result of contemporary propaganda, as the result of a sincere belief in a better future brought about by communism. Moreover, even this belief could be questioned in the case of the Strugatsky brothers, whereas in Stanislaw Lem's later years there was a "sobering up" from the utopian notions of a communist future.

The most prominent motifs, common to virtually all the texts analysed (and often already present in Bogdanov's), nevertheless correspond well with the ideology of the time: they are mainly the opposition to capitalism and feudalism, the idea of a happy life on planet Earth conditioned by the introduction of global communism, but also the supremacy of man over

¹⁴ BABULA, Vladimír. *Signály z vesmíru*, Mladá fronta: Prague 1955. Without ISBN.

¹⁵ LEM, Stanislaw. *K mrakům Magellanovým*, Mladá fronta, Nakladatelství Československého svazu mládeže: Prague 1958. Without ISBN.

¹⁶ ŠTUKA, Ivo – ROTREKL, Teodor. *Šest dnů na Luně 1*, Státní nakladatelství dětské knihy: Prague 1963. Without ISBN.

¹⁷ STRUGACKIJ, Arkadij – STRUGACKIJ, Boris. *Je těžké být bohem*, Svoboda: Prague 1973. Without ISBN.

nature and the complete taming and domination of nature by man, or the common effort to discredit religion. In the conception of other themes and in the degree of emphasis on the aforementioned themes, the individual prose works differ, which also slightly differ in their overall tone (this includes, for example, the emphasis on hostility to Western powers or admiration for Soviet Russia, which is most pronounced in the Czech authors), which we have described in more detail in the relevant chapter.

In the following sections, we address the question of identity as reflected in dystopias, especially with regard to totalitarianism (which is most often a hyperbolized version of communist totalitarianism in dystopias, and the function of such works can be understood largely as a warning and a warning of the extremes to which totalitarian restrictions on rights and interference with individual privacy could lead human society). By summarizing the conceptions of individual identity profiled in dystopian literature, we have concluded that the identity reflected in this genre of science fiction that rebels against totalitarianism is usually dependent on the relationship of the individual to the ruling regime, and we have established five categories of how dystopian authors conceptualize the identity of a person living in a totalitarian system:

- a) The citizen as a fighter against the regime
- b) Citizen persecuted by the regime
- c) Citizen as part of a homogeneous non-revolutionary society
- d) Citizen defending the regime and fighting against its opponents
- e) Citizen of a non-totalitarian society, coming into a totalitarian one

The categories mentioned above are intertwined in the individual works as the narrative perspective changes. However, we consider the main result of

the chapter to be this: one's identity in a totalitarian state is (at least as reflected in dystopian literature) largely shaped by whether or not one agrees with the ruling regime and how one manifests this attitude.

The last part of the chapter is devoted (as has already been suggested) to cyberpunk, a genre of science fiction that emerged in the 1980s and which (in English-language literature) draws on the aesthetics of dystopias, but which finds a dystopian future in consumerism and the division of the world by multinational corporations, and which finds its greatest threat to the limitations of human freedoms (like the space utopians) in extreme forms of capitalism.

Through an in-depth analysis of a number of (mostly English-language) literary works, a number of foreign (mostly online) articles about the genre, and our own interviews with Czech and foreign authors, the last part of our work provides what is probably the first comprehensive and critical definition of the dieselpunk genre. By analysing all available sources, we then divide the genre into three types:

- a) noir dieselpunk
- b) war dieselpunk
- c) technical non-war dieselpunk

The results of the thesis therefore not only show how the reflection of totalitarian regimes in science fiction evolved and how their evaluation changed along with the climate of the time - from the adoration of the communist regime in the 1950s, through the transitional period in the 1960s (in which space utopias were also created, but also strong anti-communist dystopias) through the 1970s (when there was a general suppression of the fantastic in communist-dominated countries) to the 1980s, when there was a

great wave of dystopian writing critical of the communist regime, which collapsed at the end of that decade. At the same time, the thematization of political regimes and economic systems by literary fiction circulates in response to social developments and changes in general opinion discourse. This could be divided into several phases:

1) First half of the twentieth century – The thematization of communism, capitalism and feudalism

1a) In the first dystopias (Western and Eastern) communism is seen as a totalitarian threat

1b) Utopianism and utopian literature view communism as the only path to a peaceful and contented future; The enemy of humanity, on the other hand, is found in the capitalist, feudalist and sometimes Nazi ideology systems

2) The second half of the twentieth century – A turn in the thematization of communism and capitalism

2a) Utopian thinking replaces dystopian thinking, which has been growing since the 1960s, and is highly critical of the ideas of communism; these tendencies are most pronounced with the generation of Eastern European fantasy writers emerging in the 1980s

2b) Western literature (especially American, specifically cyberpunk) thematizes the threats of capitalism in the 1980s; Western science fiction, through a new literary genre, comes to criticize capitalism, the main enemy of utopias (both the older, de facto already baroque, and especially the space utopias of the twentieth century)

3) The new millennium – depicting totalitarianism in dieselpunk

3a) In science fiction, the motif of the Second World War appears prominently (in various genre variants of science fiction, including

dieselpunk) - however, this motif is usually treated in an entertaining and action-oriented way

3b) Russian dieselpunk returns to the thematization of the communist future in the territory of today's Russia. However, it does not do so with a utopian outlook.

3c) Traditional anticommunist dystopias are almost exclusively produced by authors coming from countries with a communist regime still in place (especially China).

Thus, another result of our analyses is the constant thematization of communist and/or anti-capitalist ideas that have been present from the beginning of utopian writing through to more contemporary literature, although their form changes, as do their genre and geographical occurrence.

This development shows that it is popular literature (represented here by the selected genre variants of science fiction) that should be given more consideration in historical research, because it is popular literature that largely reflects changes in social moods and opinions, captures the turns of society's ideas and has great potential to supplement our knowledge of contemporary social memory, even though in works of literary fiction this image is usually depicted in a highly hyperbolized, fanciful and tributary to literary genres. This, however, does not detract from the urgency of the individual themes and images, perhaps even, on the contrary, increases their urgency – for it is literary fiction (and science fiction in particular) that captures contemporary imaginings of a hypothetical future (or even present and past), whether optimistic or dystopically cautionary.

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